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A Violet Wreath

EDWARD LANCASTER WILSON

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A Violet Wreath

BY
EDWARD LANCASTER WILSON

"SUCH a starved bank of moss
Till, that May-morn,
Blue ran the flash across;
Violets were born."

BROWNING.

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TO THE LOVELY VIOLET GIRL

WHOSE IMAGE IS THE INSPIRATION OF THESE POEMS
THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

"*Amor est Omnia*"

TO MR. JOHN H. KIRBY

OF HOUSTON

WHOSE APPRECIATION HAS MADE THE PUBLICATION OF

THIS VOLUME POSSIBLE

THE AUTHOR'S THANKS ARE DUE

TO YOU.

IF I were a star this would I do:
I would look deep in the eyes of you;
To learn there, in those eyes of thine,
How to shine.

If I were a bird, that would rejoice,
I'd listen close to your lovely voice,
To learn from your notes that softly ring
How to sing.

TO A GIRL WITH VIOLETS.

SWEET maid, thou wearest violets on thy breast,
And I do envy them their happy rest,
Nestling there as if they would impart
Some secret sweet unto thy tender heart.
Violets have ever been the poet's flower,
Having for him some strange and subtile power
To move his heart, and moving that, his speech.
Then when thou wearest them, O let them teach
Unto thy memory some thought of him
Who pens these words, though they are weak and dim,
And differing much from what his heart would say.
And he on many a dreary distant day,
When fondly looking back shall dream of thee,
And in his vision, thee and them shall see.
Flowers that match the hues of tropic skies—
Twin sisters of thy lovely eyes.

LOVE IS ALL.

SWEET birds shall sing by primrose ways,
And bright beams kiss the tides,
And all my days be April days
While love abides.

For me shall shine no tender stars,
Nor burn the kindly sun,
Nor music swell in heavenly bars
When love is done.

THE GARDEN OF ALLAH.

Centuries ago the Prophet spake,
"For them who are faithful and true
There lies in a place beyond the skies
A garden far hidden from view.
And there the dark-eyed houris dwell
Whose love is like to wine,
And every pleasure the heart may know
Of a surety shall be thine.
For them who die for the cause of mine
Or live in the faith of me,
I promise that they for their true worth
The Garden of Allah shall see."
Thus spake the Prophet; but truly I know
A garden that fairer seems—
Then come, sweetheart, and go with me
To the Scented Garden of Dreams!

APRIL SONG.

SWEETEST of months is April,
Sweetest of girls are you;
Month of the purple violets,
You, with eyes o' blue.

April, with moods alluring,
Skies of the violet's hue;
Queen of the radiant springtime—
Aglow with the spell of you.

JOHN O' DREAMS.

Where has he gone, poor John o' Dreams?
Carelessly singing his lovelit themes,
Wandering afar by primrose ways,
Through the sweetness of April days.
Free his steps as the wind that blows.
Who should care whither he goes?
Shall bright eyes grow dim
Oh! never for him.
Poor, vagrant minstrel piping his lay.
Who should grieve if he go away?
So fare thee well, O! John o' Dreams.

Shall he come back, poor John o' Dreams?
The world is small, though wide it seems.
Though long and far the wanderer roam,
Yet he shall dream of the lights of home,
Then he shall tire of gipsying ways,
His heart turn home in the sweet Spring
days.
When on the hedge row
Wild blossoms blow,
He shall come back as in olden time,
Merrily chanting his careless rhyme.
Hail to thee, then, O! John o' Dreams.

HILLS OF SONG.

OVER the hills of song
We'll wander forth today;
Fresh winds are blowing strong,
And flowers scent the way.
What care we for the weather
That God to us may send,
If hand in hand together
We seek the rainbow's end.

Over the Hills of Song
We'll journey there apart—
By pleasant ways and long
Just you and I, sweetheart,
And by blown upland heather
And o'er the flowered lea,
In bad or bonnie weather,
We'll wander—you with me.

SHIP OF DREAMS

WITH thundering guns and banners fluttering gay,
Proudly she came, cleaving the waters bright,
With burnished decks and crew in strict array—
The gay and gallant Windom, trim and white.

About the slender masts soft zephyrs blew;
She seemed a magic bark of fairy themes:
And then you came—and all at once I knew
It was in very truth the Ship of Dreams.

BE MY SWEETHEART.

SWEETHEART, be my Sweetheart while April days are here;
Sweetheart, be my Sweetheart, nor have a doubt or care;
For yonder in the hedgerow
The thrush is calling gay:
"O tarry not, but haste and go
On love's bright road today."
And life shall be full joyous, all smiles and not a tear,
If you will be my Sweetheart while April days are here.

Sweetheart, be my Sweetheart through all the live-long year;
Sweetheart, be my Sweetheart, there is no cause for fear.
Hard by the Hills of Yonder
An Eden for us waits;
Come, love, and let us wander
Toward its Sunlit Gates.
Our days shall be all laughter, our hearts shall know no care,
If you will be my Sweetheart through all the happy year.

ON A POEM BY CAMOMENS.

IN a poem old I read,
For a princess writ, I ween,
Where the lover, sighing, said,
"Sweetest eyes were ever seen."

Did he tell her by the sea,
Or by banks of mossy green?
How then, poet, answered she,
"Sweetest eyes were ever seen."

Did the bulbul hush her song,
And the flowers gently lean?
Hear her soothe or do him wrong?
"Sweetest eyes were ever seen."

Did the white lids flutter down,
Hide the gray or was it green?
Or deep wells of tender brown?
"Sweetest eyes were ever seen."

Were they like the Lisbon skies,
Violet purple? Yes, I ween.
I too loved the same dear eyes,
"Sweetest eyes were ever seen."

Poet dead and I today
'Cross the centuries look and lean.
We have loved and sung love's sway—
"Sweetest eyes were ever seen."

MOON MAIDEN.

I DREAMED a dream, a wild, strange theme
Of a maiden cold and bright
Who dwelt on high in a starry sky
In region of astral light;
The fairy's dance in midnight trance
Is more and again as loud
As the rythmic beat of her dimpled feet
As she treads on a filmy cloud.

When night is done and the golden sun
Is flooding lea and lawn,
She seeks her rest and covers her breast
With down of the dappled dawn.
I sent to her where the planets flare
The lilt of my lyric rune,
And called this girl from the astral whirl—
From out of the mystic moon!

By mortal birth she came to earth
And lingered with us a space;
And I knew her then on the ways of men
And worshipped her spirit's grace.
But it was not meet that a thing so sweet
Or a love so strange should be;
She spread bright wings as a bird that sings,
And fluttered away from me!

Where has she sped, whence has she fled,
From the reach of my eager eyes?
Does she dwell afar in a radiant star,
Or Gardens of Paradise?
But her soul's sweet grace in whatever place
I hold forever and long—
For I keep this still, and always will,
By the lure of my lyric song.

IN ARCADY.

AS I muse before the fire,
Dreaming o'er my fond desire,
I wonder what this strange spell means to me.
Time then opens wide the door,
Lets me read the old life o'er,
When we knew each other once in Arcady.

When we wandered, you and I,
'Neath the bright, blue Grecian sky,
Saw the glory of the wide and shining sea.
Then I knew no deeper bliss
Than the wonder of your kiss,
When we loved so long ago in Arcady.

Had you eyes for me alone,
As I hurled the discus stone
At the Olympian games besides the Aegean Sea?
Did we kiss, and did we weep,
Did we drink love's fountain deep,
As we wandered through the vales of Arcady?

Now some thousand years have spun,
Still I can't believe 'tis done—
The love begun so long ago for me.
Though stern Time has shut the door,
Yet I live the sweet dream o'er—
If you love me, we are still in Arcady.

MOON MAIDEN.

FAIRY Moon Maiden
With star-fire laden,
How did you come to this world of ours?
Nursed on the dew
Of violets blue—
Born in the heart of the dreaming flowers.

I gaze and ponder,
Lost in wonder,
How such a miracle could be true.
Nor make it my task
To question or ask,
But take as God's gift the wonder of you.

CONSTANCY.

A BUTTERFLY lingered a moment
To taste of the blowing rose,
Then fluttered on searching pinions
The length of the garden close.

Fluttered by lilac and pansy
And lilies that leaned apart,
Passed the pride of the pouting poppy,
To swoon in a violet's heart.

LOVE'S WAY.

IF love were always laughter
And never tear nor sigh,
A joy with no pain after,
A grief that passes by—
If love were always laughter
And never tear nor sigh.

If love were always singing,
And never grief nor moan;
Its ways forever ringing
With melody alone—
If love were always singing
And never grief nor moan.

If love were always beauty,
Without one cankering care,
To dance its dainty duty
In measure without fear—
If love were always beauty,
Without one cankering care.

'Twould be satiety,
If love were only this;
Its ways must varied be,
A tear as well as kiss—
'Twould be satiety,
If love were always this.

A DREAM LYRIC.

IN a happy dream
While the bright stars beam
I sigh in my sleep for you;
And my soul takes flame
While I murmur your name,
And my heart beats warm and true.

And through all the night,
So starry and bright,
You come with your smile and kiss;
And my heart leaps high,
And I'd rather die
Than wake from such raptured bliss.

But the gray dawn breaks,
And my soul awakes
From this vision of joy complete;
And I loath the day
That steals me away
From your love so full and sweet.

And if I were sure
Such a dream would endure
As inspired this tender rhyme,
I'd pray for a spell,
In whose trance I'd dwell;
Through the lapse of infinite time.

AROON.

DO YOU remember, Nora Malone,
How green were the fields of County Cork?
The curlew's cry and the sea's sad moan,
As we turned home from the long day's work?
We loved and sang in the old, sweet days;
The songs we sang were love's own tune,
But your feet have strayed into far-off ways,
And I dwell alone, aroon, aroon.

When will you come back, Nora Malone,
Where fields are green and the sky is blue,
Where the lover waits faithful and lone,
His heart still full of the dream of you.
The sea's turned gray and the curlews cry,
And at night I hear the banshe croon;
And life's a bother of moan and sigh—
I would I were dead, aroon, aroon.

IN DREAMLAND.

LOOK where she walks in dreamland,
So fair and maiden wise;
A radiance 'round her pathway,
A glory in her eyes.

And I behold her beauty
And marvel much to see;
And then my faint heart whispers,
"Perhaps she loveth me."

Oh, strange the spell and subtile,
And filled with opal light,
With hope, despair and rapture,
And pain and all delight.

But I, poor hapless lover,
Have not the right to say,
"Sweetheart, I love you only
Forever and a day."

DREAMS.

WHEN golden stars doth gem the skies
And night winds softly blow,
I feel again thy tender eyes
And hear thy laughter low.

And when the sun has flooded bright
The earth and murmuring sea,
I pray that soon may come the night
That brings the dream of thee.

SONG.

O NIGHTINGALE that singeth in the grove—
That maketh the woodland mellow with thy song;
Fly as a carrier dove,
Seek the one I love,
Keep true thy course though the way be long.
If thou findest her in slumber deep
Storm with thy song the bastions of sleep,
Lure her back through the Ivory Gates.
Tell her in notes of gold
Of a love that's manifold,
How eagerly, how sadly her lover waits.
Whisper within her ear
The tale of his hope and fear.

Hasten, then hasten, thou queen among doves;
Tell her again in thy song's sweet pain,
How humbly he worships, how proudly he loves.

SONG.

"WHERE are the snows of Yesterday—"
O! Sweetheart, who can tell?
The scented winds that oft would play—
The silver rain that fell?
And where the grace of tender May
And April's radiant light?
The glamour that has passed away
And faded into night.

Where is the snow of Yesterday,
That clad the distant peak?
The glory that we sought to stay,
The charm we could not keep?
And where has fled the golden light
Of stars and moon and sun—
The day less bright and darker night
Since all of love is done.

THE LOST CHORD.

WHY so silent, John o' Dreams,
Whence have fled the fairy themes
That once often you would sing so wildly well?
Has a rift within the lute
Made the magic music mute,
Stilled the singing that of old would sweetly swell?

Why so silent, John o' Dreams,
Are there yet no golden gleams
That may shine for you once more by land or sea?
Touch again the living string,
In some measure it will sing,
Though a chord be lost from out its melody.

THE ROSE.

If I were the rose, sweetheart,
  That grew by the garden walk,
And on some lovely morn
  You should pluck me from my stalk
And call me your own dark rose,
  And lay me against your breast,
My spirit would swoon with bliss
  And sink into perfect rest.
My spirit would faint with bliss
  At hearing your gracious talk,
If I were the rose, sweetheart,
  That grew by the garden walk.

If I were the rose, sweetheart,
  That leaned o'er your mossy grave,
And, listening, only should hear
  The night winds moan and rave;
Then one by one I would drop
  My leaves on your sculptured stone—
You, hearing them fall, might feel
  Not so much, dear one, alone.
Thus ever your lonely mound
  My petals like tears would lave,
If I were the rose, sweetheart,
  That leaned o'er your mossy grave.

PRINCESS MINE.

YOU looked a queen in her pride that night;
Princess mine, O! Princess mine.
Robed in your gown of shimmering white.
Princess mine, O! Princess mine.

Loud and long the violins wailed,
Princess mine, O! Princess mine,
The blood at my mad heart stopped and paled,
Princess mine, O! Princess mine.

Light and gay were the dancers' feet,
Princess mine, O! Princess mine;
A voice whispered, time is fleet,
Princess mine, O! Princess mine.

I said the words that I had to tell,
Princess mine, O! Princess mine;
And my sad heart echoed, "Fare thee well,
Fare thee well, O! Princess mine."

THE ROSARY.

ONCE when I heard the Rosary,
Sung in a twilight hour,
The voice floated on the night
And woke the sleeping flower;
I, listening, then began to dream
Of things that used to be—
"The hours I've spent with thee, dear heart,
A string of pearls to me."

And as I heard the Rosary,
There in the shadowed room,
The words seemed like an echo sad
That spake of hapless doom.
I felt once more the old, sweet pain,
Again my heart was wrung—
"I tell each bead unto the end,
And there a cross is hung."

So when I heard the Rosary,
Upon that tender eve,
I felt my eyes with hot tears fill,
My spirit softly grieve;
I felt again the olden love,
The sense of bitter loss—
"And try to kiss the cross at last,
Sweetheart, to kiss the cross."

"TREASURES."

JUST a bunch of withered violets,
Bound with a silken thread,
Breathing in faintest fragrance
Of happiness now dead,
Of a day in witching April
We two in a tiny boat,
In the radiant heart of springtime,
On a silver stream afloat;
The sky so soft and tender,
So green the leafy shore,
Her eyes as darkly purple
As the flowers that she wore.
Just a bunch of withered violets
And a bit of faded thread—
Why keep these empty treasures
When the tender dream has fled?

SWEETHEART.

TO GODS that be I make one plea,
And this is the sum of my prayer:
Sweetheart of mine, the love of thine,
To have and to hold, my dear.

If not for me this boon shall be,
Then I'll make it my lifelong care
To dream of your eyes, where the love-light lies,
And the sheen of your silken hair.

FOREVER.

DID I love you best in the April weather,
When soft winds blew o'er the hills of heather?
Do I love you best in the drear December
And look for your face in the glowing ember?

Is love after all but a sweet, dear dreaming?
Something not real, but merely a seeming?
This riddle's answer I may learn, no never;
I know I love you forever and ever.

IN DELICATE VERSE.

Ever I woo thee
In delicate verse,
For on my tongue
Is a silent curse:
Ne'er can I say
What I would tell
That ever and e'er
I love the well.

Were I a bird,
Then I would sing:
All my wild love
In music fling;
Being but man
For better or worse
Ever must woo thee
In delicate verse.

AT THOUGHT OF YOU.

FOREVER at a moment's thought of you
The Spring will come in gladness dressed,
The scent of rains, the violet's tender blue,
And all the April days your presence blessed.

For though the winter days be sere and long,
Fond memory the glory will renew
When dreams awake your spell, ah, tender, strong—
Spring hastens at a moment's thought of you.

ADIOS, LITTLE DREAM.

ADIOS, little dream,
You've had your sparkling day;
Now spread bright wings agleam
And flutter far away.

Yes, flutter far away
To regions where I deem
All fond memories stray—
Adios, little dream.

ADIOS.

SWEET maid, you have too cruel been,
So now I seek the road,
And gaily foot the King's highway—
Nor carry purse nor load.
But when the thrush calls in the hedge,
The violet lifts its blue,
Oh! then I'll pause and muse upon
The voice and eyes of you.

Flowers of thought I take with me
To scent the evening's close—
Deep purple violets in their pride,
And one dark, damask rose;
Pansies for thoughts, the poets say,
And one faint sprig of rue—
And at the turning of the road
I kiss my hand to you.

LOVE'S REPRISAL.

I SAID to Love, "I know you not,"
And with harsh words forbade him stay,
And he, lip trembling, mourned his lot
And hastened from my house away.

And then it was, most strange to say,
I, restless, mourned my lonely lot,
But when I beckoned Love my way
He only said, "I know you not."

REQUIEM.

LOVE on a bed of roses dead;
What has caused his dying?
Frail little dream so quickly fled,
Too late now for sighing.

Was all of the fault just mine, dear,
Or were we fate defying?
That now we see him cold and drear—
Love on roses lying.

AUF WIEDERSEHEN.

AUF WIEDERSEHEN! The soft, sad German
phrase,
I read, and then my heart brims o'er
With memories bitter-sweet of other days,
The days that are no more.

And when shall we two meet again, dear friend,
To meet, and but to part?
Fate shapes our lives unto the destined end—
Auf Wiedersehen, sweetheart!

A WAYSIDE SONG.

"I'M trying so hard to forget you,"
I heard a street band play,
And paused in the crowded thoroughfare
Blocking the passer's way.
"I'm trying so hard to forget you—"
Only a wayside song;
It ceased, and I went on my journey,
But the way seemed sad and long.

FINIS

IF any verse within this book
Should touch your heart with tender grace
And cause to spring in Fancy's nook
Some memory of my speech or face,
To bygone days then turn a look,
And think on me a little space.

Poems

THE BRIDES OF NOVEMBER.

TO MISSES BESSIE KIRBY, DI M'FADDEN AND GEORGIA OCHILTREE.

In the eleventh month of the kind old year
The chrysanthemum blows tender and rare,
And poets have called it November's Bride.
But in truth I know there are others beside.
I give my toast in praise of those
Whom the heart loves best and the heart best knows—
To the sweetest brides beneath the sky—
Georgia and Bessie and Di.

Three homes, three cities, each give one
To make the triple love tale done.
Three homes will keep a vacant chair,
Three towns will miss a presence dear.
Friend, kin and stranger all will vie
In remembering Bessie, Georgia and Di.

So we give them away and say farewell
With love in our hearts we never can tell,
With laughter and jest and silent prayer,
With smiling lips but an unshed tear;
So we bid God speed with a passing sigh
To the maidens three—Bess, Georgia and Di

HOUSTON.

"WESTWARD the star of empire takes its way—"
And thou rough-hewn colossus of the West,
Hero of heroes of a better day
When there were giants in the land. The best
And wisest of all the valiant band
That won for us the guerdon of the land.

A fair rich heritage of field and flood,
Thy victory hath made forever good.
And I, who scorn to wield a fulsome pen,
Delight to sing thy worth before all men.
Thou and thy peers, with arts of peace and war,
Created empire 'neath the Western Star.

HYMN FOR ST. PATRICK'S DAY.

YE sons of Erin, lift thy song
Upon this glorious morn.
With throbbing hearts think of thy land,
The green graves of thy martyred band,
Thy homes despoiled by alien hand,
Thy country crushed, forlorn.

Nor doubt that in the bourne of years
Thy hopes fulfilled shall be;
That God in time that seemeth good
Shall raise a state of Celtic blood
Fast guarded by the emerald flood,
An Ireland proud and free.

In faith of that diviner day
We give thee praise before all men,
To every wind our anthems fling,
The memory of our heroes sing,
And humbly now our prayer we bring
To thee, O! Lord, Amen, Amen!

CHAMPS DE MARS.

I STOOD at the tomb of Napoleon,
Dim under the gilded dome,
And thought of the myriad soldiers
That lie in alien loam;
Of the millions that fought for his glory,
The thousands that died for his throne,
Moldering in sod and the ocean—
And the chief here in state, alone.
Buried 'neath snows of Russia,
Legions, file upon file,
Covered by sands of Syria,
Lost in the mystic Nile;
Sleeping where skies of Italy
Bend over temple and shrine,
Their spectral sentinels guarding
The fords of the German Rhine.
And yonder by Belgium's capital,
There on lost Waterloo,
Lieth the pride of the army—
The Guard, in death still true!
Here in the midst of his people,
Here in his capital gay,
Silent, alone, unheeding,
He dreameth the ages away.
O, say, in some shadowy region
Beyond the farthest star,
Shall they wake again in their splendor?—
Shall he lead them again to war?

FANTASY.

IF I were a Sultan in Samarcand,
And you just a slip of a girl,
I would garner the riches at my command
To deck you in purple and pearl;
Bracelets of gold for your warm, round arm
And jewels of limpid light,
And splendid stones of magic charm
To bind your throat so white.

And milk-white camels should race in the sun
And peacocks proudly preen,
And all the pomps my might had won
I'd give to you, my queen.
And silver lutes should sound at night
And fountains run with wine,
And all fair things to dazzle sight—
The spoils of sea and mine.

A Garden of Roses, of white and red,
I'd make for you, my love,
And we'd listen there on a scented bed
To the coo of the mating dove;
And your soul would give me sigh for sigh,
True love in a fairy land—
If you were a slip of a girl and I
A Sultan in Samarcand!

BY AN ANCIENT TOMB.

When Pan went piping gaily
Through vales of Arcady,
When wild Sapho was singing
Beside the Aegean Sea,
When all the world was youthful
And all of life abloom,
They covered her with violets
And laid her in this tomb.

What might have been her story,
Or when she died, or how?
Hid by the veil of ages,
We never shall know now;
But sweet she was and lovely,
My dreaming heart knows true,
Else why should spring thus fondly
The myrtle and the rue?

And was she wife or mother,
Or some sweet lily maid,
Whom broken-hearted lovers
Bore to this fragrant glade?
In time when Pan went piping
Down vales of Arcady,
Or Sapho wove her sonnets
By the bright Grecian sea.

MOTHER'S ROSE.

A WHITE rose growing by the garden wall,
A white rose blowing in the morning sun;
I think of one whose soul was just as white,
A saint of earth whose simple life is done.

A white rose making sweet the heavy winds
That 'round its fragrant beauty love to play;
I pluck the white rose from its slender stem
And wear it for the sake of Mother's Day.

GALILEE.

DEAR little lake of Galilee,
Your waves as brightly glow
As when He walked and taught by you
So many years ago.

Oceans and gulfs may be forgot,
But not you, little sea,
Because the Master loved you so—
Sweet, tender Galilee.

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